

## STAFFING

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the occupation of Orthotist/Prosthetist, GS-667, appointed under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405 (a)(1)(B).

**2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this handbook replace the existing Orthotist/Prosthetist Qualification Standard in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix G32, in its entirety. The new standards are effective on the date of this publication, however no action may be taken to convert or promote employees until training and guidance is received. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management web site](#). Significant changes include:

a. Revises education and experience requirements, as well as education and/or experience combinations.

b. Establishes certification requirements for this occupation.

**3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.

**4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.

**5. RESCISSIONS:** VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G32, dated March 17, 2006.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

/s/

Dat P. Tran  
Acting Assistant Secretary for  
Office of Enterprise Integration

/s/

Pamela S. Mitchell  
Acting Assistant Secretary for  
Human Resources and Administration

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[APPENDIX G32. ORTHOTIST/PROSTHETIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD  
GS-667

Veterans Health Administration

**1. COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment as an orthotist, prosthetist, or orthotist/prosthetist in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The 667 series includes positions that administer, supervise, or perform work involving designing, fabricating, or fitting orthotic or prosthetic devices to preserve or restore function to patients with disabling conditions of the limbs and spine, or with partial or total absence of limbs.

a. The work requires:

(1) Knowledge of anatomy, physiology, body mechanics, the application and function of orthoses and/or prostheses, and of the materials and technology available for use in, and fabrication of, such devices;

(2) Skill in the use of tools, materials, and specialized equipment; and

(3) The ability to deal effectively with patients and their problems and to work with other members of the medical team.

b. Included in this series is such work as:

(1) Planning, developing, and directing an orthotics and prosthetics program at the national, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), or local level;

(2) Serving as an integral member of the professional team providing advice to physicians with regard to development of a treatment plan, selection and prescription of devices, and furnishing information concerning such matters as new developments in the fields of orthotics and prosthetics; and

(3) Assisting in, or leading, research and investigative studies such as those of experimental materials, microprocessor based components, myoelectric components, and emerging technologies.

c. The administrative aspects of the work require an understanding of statistical information and principles, budget development and management, vendor evaluation, human resources, inventory management, the National Prosthetic Patient Database, Decision Support System, a knowledge of the Prosthetic National Software package, and knowledge of accreditation and certification requirements for orthotic and prosthetic laboratories and staff.

**2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS**

a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g, this part.)

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b. **Education**

(1) A bachelor's degree or higher in orthotics and prosthetics from a Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accredited program.

OR,

(2) A bachelor's degree or higher in any major along with a post-graduate orthotics or prosthetics certificate from a CAAHEP accredited program.

c. **Foreign Graduates.** Graduates of foreign degree programs must have proof of a minimum of a Bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university (or foreign equivalent, as verified through an independent credential evaluation company), with a specialization in orthotics and prosthetics.

d. **Board Certification.** Candidates must be board certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics (ABC) or the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification (BOC) as an orthotist, prosthetist, or orthotist/prosthetist. The board certificate must be current and the applicant must abide by the certifying body's requirements for continuing education. Certification as a technician, pedorthist, assistant or fitter does not meet this requirement.

e. **Loss of Credential.** An employee in this occupation who fails to maintain the required certification must be removed from the occupation which may result in termination of employment. At the discretion of the appointing official, an employee may be reassigned to another occupation for which he/she qualifies if a placement opportunity exists.

f. **Grandfathering Provision.** Orthotists, prosthetists, or orthotist/prosthetists employed in VHA in this occupation on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series and grade held, including positive education and certification that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

(1) Orthotists, prosthetists, or orthotist/prosthetists that do not meet the basic requirements for education and certification may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or demoted within the occupation, but may not be promoted beyond the journey level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.

(2) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

(3) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation who subsequently obtain additional education and/or certification that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

(4) If an employee who was retained under this provision leaves the occupation, the employee loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of reentry to the occupation.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** Orthotists, prosthetists, or orthotist/prosthetists must be proficient in spoken and written as required by 38 U.S.C. 7402(d).

### 3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS

#### a. Creditable Experience

(1) **Knowledge of Current Orthotist/Prosthetist Practices.** To be creditable, the experience must have demonstrated the use of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with current professional orthotic and/or prosthetic professional practice.

(2) **Quality of Experience.** The experience must be post-degree, from an accredited training program and include work as a professional orthotist/prosthetist directly related to the position to be filled. Experience satisfying this requirement may be paid or non-paid employment. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher level duties must consist of significantly larger scope, administrative independence, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.

(3) **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience as a professional orthotist/prosthetist is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time workweek. For example, an orthotist/prosthetist would receive 1 week of full-time credit for each 2 weeks of half-time work.

b. **Titles.** For purposes of this qualification standard the reference “orthotist/prosthetist” is intended to mean orthotist, prosthetist, or orthotist/prosthetist.

(1) **Orthotist.** An allied health professional specifically trained to provide or manage the provision of a custom designed, fabricated, modified, and fitted orthosis based upon independent or consultative clinical assessment of the patient’s unique needs and desires, as well as their expectations pursuant to a physician’s prescription.

(2) **Prosthetist.** An allied health professional specifically trained to provide or manage the provision of a custom designed, fabricated, modified, and fitted prosthesis based upon independent or consultative clinical assessment of the patient’s unique needs and desires, as well as their expectations and pursuant to a physician’s prescription.

(3) **Orthotist/Prosthetist.** An allied health professional specifically trained to provide or manage the provision of custom designed, fabricated, modified and fitted orthoses and prostheses based upon the independent or consultative clinical assessment of the patient’s unique needs and desires, as well as their expectations and pursuant to a physician’s prescription.

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c. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

(1) **GS-5 (Entry Level)**

(a) **Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(b) **Assignment.** Assignments at this grade level are entry level trainee in nature where the individual receives developmental assignments designed to build upon the base knowledge, skills, and abilities. The orthotist/prosthetist at this level receives training and instruction to develop proficiency in essential occupational tasks such as taking measurements, patient communication, and fabrication and fitting of simple appliances. The work is performed under close supervision.

(2) **GS-7**

(a) **Experience.** One year of creditable experience as an orthotist/prosthetist equivalent to the next lower grade level.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:

1. Knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, physics, and etiology of diseases.

2. Knowledge of psychology and age-related competency.

3. Knowledge of materials science including materials such as plastics, composites, metals, and leather commonly used in fabrication.

4. Ability to use hand and power tools in the fabrication of devices.

5. Ability to communicate orally and in writing.

(c) **Assignment.** Assignments at this grade level represent a developmental level where the individual continues developing the more complex knowledge, skills, and abilities to prepare for substantially independent functioning at the GS-9 grade level. The work includes consultation with the physician, therapist, and/or senior orthotist/prosthetist staff members to obtain and understand the prescription; taking measurements for fabrication and fitting for common disability levels including orthoses for the trunk and cervical spine, leg braces, and prostheses for short or long stumps; and fabrication and fitting of those appliances. Supervision is close for developmental assignments and more general in nature for assignments for which the individual has demonstrated competency. The supervisor is present at final fittings.

(3) **GS-9**

(a) **Education.** Education equivalent to 2 full years of progressively higher level graduate education or master's or equivalent graduate degree in orthotics and/or prosthetics, provided the applicant's total background demonstrates the core competencies for GS-9 level assignment.

**OR,**

(b) **Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level which demonstrates possession of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to provide orthotic/prosthetic services in a hospital setting.

(c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the education or experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:

1. Ability to attend clinics and participate as a member of the treatment team. This includes knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, physics, and etiology of diseases as well as knowledge of psychology and age-related competencies.

2. Knowledge of the Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS).

3. Ability to conduct clinical patient analyses such as gait, range of motion, life style, etc., for patients with complex but typical conditions.

4. Ability to take necessary measurements, casts, or scans to develop positive molds of the affected area of the body to create orthoses and/or prostheses.

(d) **Assignments.** Employees at this level perform a broad range of orthotic and prosthetic services designing custom devices using standard components to optimize patient performance for difficult and complex but typical conditions. Assignments include clinic attendance to provide information on standard and stock items which are readily available. The work involves identification of the biomechanical condition; explaining procedures to patients to reduce anxiety and gain support and cooperation; detailed patient assessment including conducting gait analysis, range of motion, coordination and balance, and motor skills; interviewing patients for lifestyle assessments; taking necessary measurements, casts, or scans to develop positive molds; recognizing physical abnormalities, deviations, and complicating conditions; fabricating, fitting, and evaluating these custom devices; and maintenance of the patient's record. The work may include use of Computer Assisted Design/Computer Assisted Manufacturing (CAD/CAM) systems.

(4) **GS-11 (Full Performance Level)**

(a) **Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience as an orthotist/prosthetist equivalent to the next lower grade level that demonstrates possession of the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to provide orthotic/prosthetic services in a hospital setting.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:

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1. Ability to attend clinics and participate as a fully participating member of the treatment team with considerable influence in the development of the treatment plan. This includes advanced knowledge of medical terminology, anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, kinesiology, physics, and etiology of diseases as well as knowledge of psychology and age related competencies.

2. Ability to conduct clinical patient analyses such as gait, range of motion, life style, etc., for patients with a wide range of complex medical conditions which include unusual problems or complications, and to design unique or innovative devices to accommodate those conditions.

3. Ability to recognize physical abnormalities, deviations, and complicating conditions with potentially life threatening implications.

(c) **Assignments.** This is considered to be the full performance level. The orthotist/prosthetist communicates and interacts with physicians, allied health professionals, patients, and caregivers in various interdisciplinary clinical settings, rehabilitation medicine, orthopedics, neurosurgery, vascular care, podiatry, oncology, etc., as a subject matter expert to develop the orthotic and/or prosthetic treatment plan. The work includes complex patient analyses in accordance with established procedures for patients with unusual conditions, multiple complex conditions, interrelated conditions, etc.; assessment of the patient for indications/contra-indications and discussion of the assessment with the physician/requesting provider for the purpose of developing the overall treatment plan with considerable influence in the development of that plan; consideration of new and emerging technologies in designing unique or innovative devices to accommodate or treat a wide range of complex medical conditions which include unusual problems or complications. The orthotist/prosthetist at this level is expected to recognize physical abnormalities, deviations, and complicating conditions with potentially life threatening implications.

(5) **GS-12**

(a) **Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level as an orthotist/prosthetist functioning as a full member of the clinical team which includes significant involvement in treatment plan development for the most complex types of conditions.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSA and demonstrate the potential to acquire the assignment-specific KSAs designated by an asterisk (\*):

1. Knowledge of regulatory requirements established by the ABC, BOC, the National Committee for Orthotic/Prosthetic Education (NCOPE), the International Association of Orthotists and Prosthetists (IAOP), the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (AAOP), Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), etc.

\*2. Knowledge of administrative functions including budget development and management, inventory management, space and workload planning, as well as knowledge of the National Prosthetic Patient Database (NPPD), knowledge of the Prosthetic National Software (PNS) package, Decision Support System (DSS), and knowledge of accreditation requirements for orthotic and prosthetic laboratories and certification requirements for individuals.



\*3. Ability to analyze data and provide reports using CPRS, Vista, DSS, HCPCS codes and other patient database information.

\*4. Ability to provide training to orthotists/prosthetists in new technologies and innovations in devices.

\*5. Ability to manage and supervise employees. (To be used if the assignment is supervisory in nature.)

(c) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Candidates at this grade level are in one of the following assignments:

1. **Advanced Practitioner.** The orthotist/prosthetist assignment at this level is intended for smaller, independent laboratories. In addition to functions typical of the GS-11 grade level, the assignment involves responsibility for assuring the accreditation of the laboratory, regulation compliance, and a variety of administrative duties such as developing a budget; managing inventory and resources; overseeing contract employees; planning the orthotics and prosthetics clinical schedule; conducting site surveys of commercial vendors; devising short and long range goals in accordance with local, VISN, and VHA Central Office direction; and conducting quality assurance activities; etc. The orthotist/prosthetist communicates and interacts with physicians, allied health professionals, patients, and caregivers in various interdisciplinary clinical settings, rehabilitation medicine, orthopedics, neurosurgery, vascular care, podiatry, oncology, etc., as a subject matter expert to develop the orthotic and/or prosthetic treatment plan. The work includes complex patient analyses in accordance with established procedures for patients with unusual conditions, multiple complex conditions, interrelated conditions, etc.; assessment of the patient for indications/contra-indications and discussion of the assessment with the physician/requesting provider for the purpose of developing the overall treatment plan with considerable influence in the development of that plan; consideration of new and emerging technologies in designing unique or innovative devices to accommodate or treat a wide range of complex medical conditions which include unusual problems or complications. The orthotist/prosthetist at this level is expected to recognize physical abnormalities, deviations, and complicating conditions with potentially life threatening implications.

2. **Supervisory Orthotist/Prosthetist.** The orthotist/prosthetist at this level serves as supervisor of an orthotics/prosthetics laboratory assessing, planning, and evaluating the orthotic/prosthetic program at the facility level to ensure proper coordination between the delivery of orthotic/prosthetic services and the overall delivery of health care. Responsibilities include assuring the accreditation of the laboratory, regulatory compliance, and a variety of administrative duties such as developing a budget, managing inventory and resources, overseeing contract employees, supervising assigned staff, etc. The assignment includes performance of the full range of supervisory duties. This includes responsibility for assignment of duties; development of performance standards and performance evaluations; and recommendations for appointment, awards, advancement, and when appropriate, disciplinary action; etc. At this level, the orthotist/prosthetist serves as a consultant within orthotic and prosthetic treatment service and with other facility health care staff in evaluating health care delivery to patients.

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(6) **GS-13**

(a) **Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSA and demonstrate the potential to acquire the assignment-specific KSAs designated by an asterisk (\*):

1. Knowledge of regulatory requirements established by ABC, BOC, NCOPE, IAOP, AAOP, JCAHO, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMMS), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), etc., in order to provide advice to VISN management of the implementation of those requirements.

\*2. Knowledge of administrative functions including budget development and management, inventory management, space and workload planning, as well as knowledge of the National Prosthetic Patient Database, a knowledge of the Prosthetic National Software package, CPRS, DSS and knowledge of accreditation requirements for orthotic and prosthetic laboratories and knowledge of certification requirements for clinical staff in order to develop VISN guidelines and policies, allocate resources within the VISN, and project future workload for the VISN.

\*3. Ability to analyze data and provide reports using HCPC codes and other patient database information from VISN orthotic and prosthetic laboratories and to provide such reports to VISN management.

\*4. Ability to serve as a consultant to orthotists/prosthetists within the VISN on emerging technologies, the most difficult and complex cases, changes in policy, etc.

\*5. Ability to supervise. (To be used if the assignment is supervisory in nature.)

(c) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and range of variety, and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Candidates at this grade level are in one of the following assignments:

1. **Advanced Practitioner.** Non-supervisory orthotists/prosthetists at this level would be rare; however, in some cases may be justified. The assignment must represent a substantial increase in responsibility over assignments at the GS-12 grade level. An example of an assignment that may possibly warrant this grade level is functioning as a VISN resource/consultant for orthotics and prosthetics and manager of a clinical fabrication facility. The orthotist/prosthetist serves as a referral source for questions from satellite facilities.

2. **Supervisory Orthotist/Prosthetist.** The orthotist/prosthetist at this level serves as the supervisor and laboratory manager for large laboratories or multiple satellite laboratories. In addition to the responsibilities described at the GS-12 level, this assignment includes serving as a VISN

resource/consultant for orthotics and prosthetics; performing or overseeing testing and evaluation of design concepts; overseeing and evaluating contract orthotics and prosthetics vendors.

(7) **GS-14 VHA Central Office National Clinical Manager/ National Director**

(a) **Experience.** Completion of 1 year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.

(b) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs and demonstrate the potential to acquire the assignment-specific KSAs designated by an asterisk (\*):

\*1. Ability to manage and supervise prosthetic and orthotic laboratories, conduct site visits, and review the functional level of each lab.

2. Knowledge of ABC, BOC, OSHA, and JCAHO standards and Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service policies and ability to apply these in the daily operations of orthotic and prosthetic laboratories.

\*3. Ability to provide training in new technologies involving CAD/CAM systems and devices such as computerized foot orthoses, myoelectric prostheses, and energy storing components, neuro and brain machine interface systems.

4. Ability to apply knowledge of the theories and principles used in orthotics and prosthetics to teach custom design and fabrication of devices that are innovative, complex, and/or unusual in nature.

\*5. Ability to function as a team member or leader with orthotists, prosthetists, and other professionals on committees to review local and national agenda items and to make recommendations based on the review.

6. Ability to develop reports and present at the national level to VHA leadership, Congressional members, and organizations such as AAOP, AOPA, and VSOs.

(c) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and range of variety, and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. The national clinical manager/national director is responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of a VHA nationwide delivery system for orthotic/prosthetic appliances; and related services. The assignment involves establishing performance standards for VA orthotic and prosthetic laboratories; assessment of VA orthotist/prosthetist certification; accreditation of VA orthotic/prosthetic laboratories; establishing and implementing an educational plan for clinical and technical orthotic and prosthetic laboratories staff; representing the VA as a liaison to Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services; establishing uniform competency assessment procedures for VA orthotic and prosthetic laboratories; developing and monitoring orthotic/prosthetic resident NCOPE accreditation and university preceptorship programs; establishing and implementing a communication system for clinical staff; and acting as a VA orthotic and prosthetic laboratory representative on prosthetic clinical management workgroups.

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**4. DEVIATIONS**

a. An approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignment, warrants such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.

b. Under no circumstances will the certification or education requirements be waived.

c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard may only be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office prior to placement in the position.

**Authority: 38 U.S.C. §§ 7402, 7403]**